Evaluation Reports
Summative Evaluation of Youth Service Canada

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Executive Summary

Program Description

One of seven programs under the Youth Employment Strategy, Youth Service Canada (YSC) is the official name given to the youth service corps announced in the Speech from the Throne in January 1994. YSC is designed to provide unemployed and out-of-school youths between 15 and 30 years of age an opportunity — within a project that typically lasts 6 to 9 months — to gain relevant work-related experience.

Projects are run by not-for-profit sponsor organizations that have developed proposals approved by HRDC. Sponsors are expected to assist youth with planning career choices, improving employability and making a successful transition to the labour market or return to school.

YSC's terms and conditions have been made increasingly flexible to accommodate regional and local variation. Youth may receive a weekly stipend, a completion grant or a combination of these to equal compensation that is no greater than $10,000 per project participant. Human Resources Centres of Canada (HRCCs) have the choice of transferring the administration of the completion grant to sponsors or retaining it themselves.

From the beginning of fiscal year 1994-95 to the end of fiscal year 1996-97 — the period covered by this evaluation — there were 8,237 youth participants. Including departmental overheads, budgetary costs averaged $8,277 per participant; costs to project sponsors, other community organizations and the private sector (both in-kind and financial) were estimated at $795 per participant.

Program Objectives

The objectives of YSC are to provide young Canadians with the opportunity to:

- acquire real work experience;
- learn or enhance transferable job-related skills;
- develop personal qualities and skills such as self-esteem, self-reliance, leadership, communication and teamwork;
- contribute to their community and country; and
- promote knowledge and awareness of community issues.

Achievement of overall program objectives is indicated by the extent to which participants either find or create a job, or continue their education once their project has ended.

Evaluation Approach

To address the evaluation issues, five main sources of information were used:

Key informant interviews

Personal interviews were conducted with 8 HRDC staff in headquarters, in addition to a combination of telephone and personal interviews with staff in Regional Offices (12) and in HRCCs (11). These interviews mainly examined program design and delivery.

Fax survey of project sponsors and coordinators

Approximately equal numbers of completions were achieved from sponsors (47) and coordinators (49). The survey instrument collected information on the strengths and weaknesses of YSC, the achieved objectives and suggestions for change.

Follow-up survey of project applicants

A telephone survey obtained useful information on the experience of participants (N = 908) during and after the project and overall levels of satisfaction with the project. Comparable labour market and personal experience information was obtained from non-participants (N = 334).

Program documentation

The review included literature describing the program, as well as cost data and basic descriptive data for individual projects. Of special importance was the baseline survey data, which allowed pre- and post-project comparisons of participants and non-participants.

Focus groups with representatives of sponsoring and non-participating organizations

Focus groups were held with sponsors and coordinators from participating organizations at four sites across Canada. One focus group was held with representatives of non-participating youth organizations in Metropolitan Toronto. Discussion centred on impacts on youth and suggestions for program improvement.

Key Findings

YSC projects responded well to participants' needs

Youth perceived personal development as the major benefit coming from their projects. Sponsors and coordinators agreed and almost invariably pointed to team building and leadership skills as the core project activities with the greatest benefits. Career plans were developed in almost 75% of projects. Two-thirds of participants going on to school or training credited a career plan developed in the project for the decision.

Youth satisfaction with YSC is high

YSC projects did well in attracting their target populations. Also, key informants, sponsors and coordinators agree that participants like their projects. Relatively high retention rates and very high satisfaction ratings by youth participants (an average of 6.45 on a 7-point scale) confirm this assessment.

When the few dissatisfied youth (less than 8%) were asked about what they did not like, they mentioned most frequently the coordinator and the project organization. This underscores the widely acknowledged importance of a good project design, a clear commitment from the sponsoring organization, and a strong and dedicated coordinator to ensure the success of a project.

Very few programs like YSC exist for youth

Sponsors, coordinators, key informants and representatives of non-participating youth organizations all confirm the literature review: there are very few youth projects in their area comparable to YSC in objectives or approach. Team projects with an emphasis on raising youths' awareness of community issues and bringing tangible benefits to those communities are rare.

YSC projects appear to be well suited for communities with few employers. The other federal and provincial youth programs most commonly available are wage subsidies and summer employment programs.

Key informants view YSC as a good model

Everyone consulted sees YSC as a good model of a youth employment program. The terms and conditions of the program have been amended since start-up as a result of lessons learned from the lead sites evaluation, feedback from departmental officials and the general decentralization process in HRDC.

No single burning issue needs to be addressed from the perspective of youth participants. HRDC respondents, who are much more satisfied with YSC since the new terms and conditions, were concerned about "under-resourcing" of the Youth Employment Initiative and requested the continuation of nationally-sponsored workshops for project coordinators.

Sponsors would like to see more time to prepare for projects, longer projects, more money to cover overhead costs and financial support from HRDC for coordinator training.

Both participating and non-participating youth organizations stressed that projects aimed at "high-risk" youth inevitably require more resources.

Project leavers often did so to take a job or go back to school

Early dropouts from YSC left most often to take a job, but negative reactions to the coordinator or the program and practical personal problems were also factors for some.

Employment opportunities and return to school were the most frequently mentioned reasons for a small number of youth who left a short time before the project ended. Relatively few youth left because of financial problems.

Economic analyzes yielded mainly neutral but consistent results over the short term

Participation in YSC had no statistically significant effect for the period studied on annualized earnings, weekly wages, hours worked per week or annual social assistance benefits. In other words, the estimates of the program's effect on these measures could easily have resulted from random variation or chance, and cannot be reliably attributed to participation in YSC.

In the short term, project participants spent less time in the labour force and less time employed than would have been the case in the absence of the YSC experience. This is accounted for by their statistically significant increase in post-program time spent in school (most youth participants) or in training. Participation in YSC also reduced reliance on employment insurance benefits.

HRDC plans to follow up with YSC participants to test the economic and employment impacts of the program over the long term.

Comparison with non-participants showed that YSC youth enjoyed the social impacts of participation

Project sponsors and coordinators gave their projects high marks for achieving a number of personal development (social) objectives. The most significant measurable effect of participation on outcomes of this kind was an increased confidence in knowing how to find a job. Participants were also less likely to turn down a job if it meant having to move.

Management Response

The announcement of Youth Service Canada (YSC) in the Speech from the Throne in 1994 marked a new way for the government to provide young people with the necessary skills and work experience they need to better develop themselves and be better prepared to make a transition into the labour market.

This evaluation provided an opportunity to look at the program design and content, the delivery processes, and the interest and uptake of the program by the youth and the community. Throughout the evaluation, regular communication between ARC Associates, Evaluation and Data Development and the Youth Initiatives Directorate (YID) enabled a quick response to items requiring clarification.

Findings in the summative evaluation of YSC continue to demonstrate the importance that participants attach to the work experience and personal development goals of the program. The participants acquire work-related skills (as defined by the Conference Board of Canada) while working in teams and providing community service. The Conference Board defines communication, thinking, learning, and attitudinal and interpersonal skills as crucial to youth's success in finding work.

The major findings of the evaluation and the comments made and action taken by YID are noted below:

1. YID should take a good look at which objective of the program it wants to emphasize.

Comments by YID: The evidence supports the retention of two indicators — return to school and employment — with employment as the ultimate goal.

There appears to be significant evidence that the program works. Fifty percent of the YSC participants found work following the program. Of the remainder, 34 percent returned to school or training. These findings indicate the value and importance of two primary indicators for the program: employment and return to school outcomes. The evidence also supports the need to develop a social indicator to capture the other benefits of the program.

Since 1997, the participant focus of YSC has been redirected to help young people who face multiple barriers to employment. For example, youth who haven't completed high school, are single parents, are Aboriginal Canadians or are living on the street often face additional barriers. The community sponsors and coordinators have indicated that there are few programs available to assist young Canadians who face multiple barriers to employment. In this light, YSC continues to meet its overall program objectives of personal development and establishing a career path.

Initial work has begun on an "access to learning" indicator that will be piloted in 1999-2000.

After the piloting and testing of the new indicator, further policy redesign and development work will be completed to fully implement the broader social indicators, and to more accurately assess the impacts of YSC on youth and communities. The transition to the labour market for young people who face multiple barriers is expected to occur in three stages: career planning, returning to school, and finding employment. Additional evaluations will also be conducted to determine the longer term impacts.

2. With the increased flexibility of YSC, concerns have been raised about different practices between and even within regions. The Youth Initiatives Directorate should consider written guidelines that would ensure uniformity across the country.

Action taken by YID: Operational guidelines have been developed and delivered to all regions and HRCCs. These operational guidelines were developed in conjunction with the regions, incorporate regional feedback, and yet accommodate the necessary regional diversity and desired program flexibility. The guidelines incorporate the principles of the terms and conditions of Youth Initiatives programs.

Key informants raised the issue of consistency. Aside from the development and delivery of the Youth Employment Initiatives operational guidelines, the accountability framework and the monitoring of results at the local and regional levels are expected to address this concern. The monitoring and tracking mechanisms established at the local and regional levels will be enhanced by a new youth project database system. Initial feedback on the piloting of the system indicates that this tool is very useful to the regions. It ensures consistency of program delivery, monitoring of program and project activity and sharing of best practices. Plans are in place to fully devolve the database system during 1999-2000.

3. The Youth Initiatives Directorate should guarantee that the agencies responsible for delivering the program have the capacity to do so.

Action taken by YID: The capacity to deliver programs has been an issue for YID and other directorates within the Human Resource Investment Branch. With the renewal of the Youth Employment Strategy, regions requested additional resources to address the capacity issues. These resources were approved and disbursed to the regions.

The capacity to deliver youth programs with less experienced staff at the local and regional levels — the result of workforce adjustment and Labour Market Development Agreements — has raised some concerns about monitoring both the financial and contracted activities of the projects. HRDC recognizes that, although the responsibility for accountability rests with the regional and local offices, YID will continue to support the regions in addressing these needs and gaps. YID is also committed to regularly scheduled

conference calls, and to the further development and roll out of the youth project database system. HRDC is committed to helping the regions with staff training, regional workshops and the jointly development of additional tools to facilitate the effective delivery of youth programs.

In conclusion, this evaluation indicates that, overall, the Youth Service Canada program continues to meet its objectives, and addresses the needs of participants. As well, there are very few, if any, programs of a similar nature for youth.

1. Introduction

1.1 Program Concept

One of seven programs under the Youth Employment Strategy, Youth Service Canada (YSC) is the official name given to the youth service corps announced in the Speech from the Throne in January 1994. The governing concept behind the program is to provide unemployed and out-of-school youths an opportunity — within a project that typically lasts 6 to 9 months — to gain relevant work-related experience, to develop their personal skills and to strengthen their sense of accomplishment through team participation in community service projects. Unlike other major programs under the Youth Employment Strategy (YES), such as Youth Internship Canada (YIC), this program is delivered only by Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC).

Key elements of YSC are the following:

- Projects are run by not-for-profit organizations ("sponsors") that have successfully developed project proposals that are funded by HRDC. Projects typically have about 15 participants.

- In determining the amount of project funding, the direct cost of a project is calculated at $10,000 per participant, of which from 20 to 30 per cent is for administrative costs and overhead and the balance is income support for participating youth.

- Youth participants, at first normally between 18 and 24 years of age but now normally ranging from 15 to 30, are paid a weekly stipend that is at or around the minimum wage (depending on the region) and a completion bonus upon successfully meeting program criteria for post-project outcomes.

- The program extends beyond job creation in a teamwork setting, as project sponsors are expected to assist youth with planning career choices, improving employability, making a successful transition into the labour market and contributing to their communities.

Achievement of overall program objectives is indicated by the extent to which participants either find or create a job, or continue their education once their project has ended.

1.2 Thrust of the Evaluation

The principal objectives of this evaluation are to determine the success of the program and the impacts of participation on youth. In addition, since there has not been a formative evaluation of the regular program, this evaluation report also addresses some design and delivery issues. A number of design-related issues were addressed in earlier evaluations of the YSC lead sites.

Because a number of significant changes were made in April 1997 in the terms and conditions of YSC projects, reports on the opinions of key informants also include views on how the current program is being administered. This provides the basis for determining how YSC administrators have responded to previously identified weaknesses.

The central focus is the effects of YSC on youth participants and, in order to apply rigorous tests whenever they are available, outcomes for participants are compared to those who did not participate in YSC. Fortunately, this evaluation has benefited from a very important data source — a baseline survey of applicants to YSC projects between start-up in the summer of 1995 and the end of March 1997.

Applicants in this period were asked by project sponsors to complete a questionnaire about their recent employment experience, their skill levels and their attitudes about themselves. This data base, with its contact information, has permitted this summative evaluation to include a follow-up telephone survey with both participants and non-participants, thus creating a number of significant analysis opportunities:

- We measured the extent to which participation in a YSC project enhanced the labour market prospects of participants. This approach uses data on a comparison group to model what would have happened to participants in the absence of YSC. It employs multiple linear regression models to control measurable differences between participants and non-participants, based on information from the baseline data. Then we employed published econometric techniques to adjust for selection bias that can arise from unmeasured differences between the groups.

- We applied the same method to the pre-post-project responses of both participants and non-participants to see what change, if any, may be attributed to participation in YSC. We measured this change with respect to a variety of non-economic variables, such as work orientation, self-esteem and motivation, as well as perceptions of a range of work-related skills.

- We also determined factors associated with project discontinuation.

The sample for this evaluation consists of project sponsors and coordinators, as well as youth applicants to projects funded to the end of fiscal year 1996-97. This represents a period prior to YSC's shift in targeted participation to place greater emphasis on recruiting "disadvantaged groups" or "high-risk youth" — defined by different regions across the country.

In addition to the baseline and follow-up surveys,[1] the evaluation employs seven different data sources:

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1 See Appendix A for a brief description of the methodology for the follow-up survey of applicants. Analysis of non-response is included.

- Key informant interviews: personal interviews with 8 HRDC staff in headquarters, and a combination of telephone and personal interviews with staff in regional offices (12) and in HRCCs (11).

- Fax survey of sponsors and coordinators[2]. Interviews were completed with 47 sponsors and 49 coordinators. The survey instrument obtained information on, among other things, the strengths and weaknesses of YSC, objectives achieved and suggestions for change.

- Program documentation, including literature describing the program, in addition to cost data and data on the location and start date of projects.

- Results of a follow-up survey of participants in lead sites projects. A telephone survey obtained useful information on participants' experience during and after the project and their overall level of satisfaction with the lead site projects.

- Results of a survey of coordinators from the lead sites evaluation. This survey was similar in design to that used for this evaluation and covered most of the same evaluation issues.

- Statistics Canada data on the youth labour force.

- Focus groups with representatives of sponsoring and non-participating organizations. Discussions were held with sponsors and coordinators from participating organizations in Edmonton, Toronto, Montreal and the Moncton area of New Brunswick. A group was held with representatives of non-participating youth organizations in Metropolitan Toronto.

1.3 Structure of this Report

This report is organized around several key evaluation issues and questions. Chapter 2 starts with the issue of relevance, and covers rationale, program design, implementation and delivery issues. Chapter 3 then examines program success, including an assessment of the anticipated economic and non-economic outcomes of the program.

Chapter 4 presents program costs, including both budgetary costs and estimated in-kind and other costs. This chapter concludes with a number of suggestions from youth participants, key informants, sponsors and non-participating organizations for changes to improve YSC.

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2 See Appendix B for a brief description of the methodology for the survey of sponsors and coordinators.

2. Program Relevance

2.1 Program Rationale

Addressing youth needs

Youth Service Canada was meant to respond to the existence of severe problems in the youth labour market. The youth group targeted by YSC is facing labour market conditions in the 1990s that are without precedent in the post-war era. Statistics Canada data from the monthly *Labour Force Survey* show that youth employment has not recovered from the recession in the early 1990s in the way that adult employment has. As a result, the gap between youth unemployment rates and adult rates has increased. Employed youths are now more likely to be able to find only part-time employment in comparison with the 1980s, when more youths were employed full-time. This pattern extends to the summer months, when fewer youths have been able to find jobs and more of them have been part-time.

Many surveys and Statistics Canada's tabulations of unemployment by level of education show that a lack of relevant experience and education are the principal labour market barriers for young workers. The design of YSC — with its emphasis on work experience, service to the community and career planning within the setting of a project team — seeks to respond directly to both of these needs. As a by-product, the project experience has frequently whetted the appetite of youth participants for additional formal education or provided insights into potential career paths. In labour market terms, then, there is a strong case that Youth Service Canada is consistent with departmental and government-wide priorities on youth and youth employment, and that it is concerned with a real and continuing social issue.

The rationale for YSC is endorsed by all information sources as follows.

Participants showed that YSC projects responded well to their needs.

- Career plans were developed in almost 75% of projects. In the vast majority of cases, the projects provided assistance through counselling or guidance (24%); career plan information (15%); some type of training (10%); goal setting (6%) or speakers (4%). Fifteen per cent of the youth said that projects did not provide assistance or that it was left to the participant.

- Both career planning and project experience influenced youths' decisions to go back to school. Two-thirds of participants going on to school or training credited a career plan developed in the project for the decision; and 30% of completers and 18% of those staying almost to the end said that the project influenced them to a large extent.

- Personal development was the major perceived benefit of projects. Building team skills, learning self-confidence, gaining an appreciation of community service and a variety of

other personal benefits were mentioned with considerably greater frequency than others. Only about 2% of youth participants thought that they did not benefit from participation.

- Just more than half of currently employed participants see their job as a step toward a career goal. Older youth (60%) and those living in Ontario (69%) were more likely than others to give this response. Younger participants and those living in B.C. were more likely to see their current job as temporary.

Key informants identified a number of program objectives addressing youth needs, stressing the importance of allowing youth to gain work experience through community service and by bridging the gap between school and work. Some respondents thought that the objectives were unchanged in their essentials from the original objectives, but others stressed that more emphasis is now being given to projects that address youth's needs — community service being more a means to that end. In other words, some key informants felt that the program is now more focussed on clients' needs with community service being somewhat de-emphasized.

Another advantage of the YSC concept, seen by key informants, is that a project could be established in communities without a strong employer base, such as rural communities. On the other hand, in some areas there may be a stigma attached to the fact that the participants do not receive wages — "there is more dignity in the wage structure than the allowance structure" — and YSC projects may be more difficult to establish. The program was thought to work especially well in rural areas where Youth Internship Canada opportunities are few, and with younger people.

Several informants commented on the new emphasis on targeting high-risk youth. For high-risk youth, YSC often represents a "good stepping stone." In many cases these youth were perceived as not being ready for the job market — hence the importance of preparing them with life and career development skills.

Although many respondents said that YSC projects have always targeted high-risk youth, a few said that an increased emphasis on this clientele is "a mistake" that "will bring trouble," as projects will do much better with "a mix of youth." Some regional and local HRDC representatives believe that if YSC is to target this group, more money needs to be made available and the length of projects will have to be extended.

Project sponsors and coordinators tended to mention personal development, career development, work experience, developing self-esteem, acquiring life skills and community awareness as youth needs that their projects were designed to meet. Team building and leadership skills activities were almost invariably mentioned as core project activities. Moreover, they topped the list of activities of greatest benefit to participants in the eyes of sponsors and coordinators.

Although projects were not always able to help youth gain employment after the project, they were valued by both representatives of participating and non-participating youth

organizations as being very important for permitting the hiring of youth and giving many their first experience of paid work.

Overall, sponsors and coordinators believe that they are directly addressing the needs of youth through the provision of work experience and other supportive project activities.

Addressing community needs

A focus on addressing relevant community needs appears to be an important criterion for project funding approval at regional and HRCC levels. The actual community needs served varied widely — this is confirmed by examples given in focus groups and from the range of sponsor activities. In practice, there is some mixing of community and youth needs, in the sense that where youth have high needs, communities also have high needs. A number of crime prevention projects undertaken under YSC illustrate this point.

Several key informants mentioned that projects are very dependent on the sponsoring organization. YSC's strength is that it forces community partnerships to develop, but the downside is that success is very dependent on the sponsor being able to tap all the resources that may be needed (e.g., career counselling for youth needs). At a time when programming money is reduced at all levels, it is even more necessary to have cooperating partnerships.

Program funding assumes that community support will be reflected in non-financial and even some financial support from the sponsoring organization and other community sources, both public and private. The rationale is that it will be a better project if the community is behind it.

Do alternatives to YSC exist for youth?

A review of the December 1997 Inventory of Canada's Youth Employment Programs and Services shows that literally dozens of programs are targeted at youth, particularly those 15-24 years of age. However, few of the programs are similar to YSC, in the way it offers:

- Work experience (but not job placement with an employer);
- Development of personal skills; and
- Strengthening of participants' sense of accomplishment through **team participation in community service projects**.

Sponsors and coordinators, key informants in HRDC and representatives of non-participating youth employment organizations agree with this assessment. Half the sponsors and coordinators responding to the survey felt that there had been no youth project in their area comparable to their YSC project, and few were comparable in objectives.

On the other hand, YSC is not alone in offering youth employment programs and services for designated youth groups. More and more provinces have programs with this focus, although the approach is generally different:

- The most common youth employment programs are wage subsidy and summer jobs programs.
- Many programs focus on responding to the needs of employers.
- Several that are not of the job placement type have basic skills training components offered through educational institutions.
- At the time of the evaluation, the provincial programs that appear to be closest to YSC in general approach include:
  - Manitoba's Youth NOW: New Opportunities to Work ($1,580,400).
  - Newfoundland's Youth Strategy Linkages ($500,000).
  - Quebec's Young Volunteers ($1.5 million).
  - B.-C.'s Environmental Youth Team ($10.4 million), which takes a work experience approach with similarities to some YSC environmental projects.
  - One option within Ontario Works that permits youth to volunteer to help not-for-profit organizations.

YSC is also different in approach from other federally-funded youth programs. The vast majority of other federal youth employment programs are of the summer employment or internship type, which offer wage subsidies and work experience to participants.

2.2 Program Design, Implementation and Delivery

Changes in design and implementation

From the perspective of youth participants, little has changed from the original program in the way in which projects operate. More significant changes have affected sponsoring organizations, and HRDC staff at headquarters, in the regional offices and in HRCCs.

The main change for youth was the handling of the completion grant: as a result of criticism of this feature of the program by sponsors and HRCC staff, the process has been clarified. Typically, participants were given a portion of the grant ($500) at completion of the project and allowed 52 weeks to make a transition to employment (including self-employment), return to school or pay off a student loan. Youth were required to show proof of the transition, in most cases to sponsoring agencies.

This arrangement is now working well, according to HRDC staff. On the other hand, some sponsors (chosen from projects completed before the design changes) felt that the completion grant did not provide sufficient incentive, was too complex to administer, had guidelines for acceptance that were too restrictive, or took too long to receive. At the same time, most sponsors liked the completion grant as "forced saving" and did not see any weaknesses in the structure of payments to youth participants. Many of the criticisms expressed have been addressed in the new terms and conditions.

Some criticism of the amount of the stipend paid to youth participants — noted in earlier evaluations — persists. Many sponsors, coordinators and key informants felt that the stipend is adequate for those who are still living with their parents, but for youth living on their own — especially single parents — it is not.

In the focus groups, sponsors and coordinators indicated that they would like to see more flexibility in the stipend. Some thought it was too much for 18 and 19 year olds; others thought it should be varied to reflect the effort being made by the participants. In one group, respondents said that youth participants did not like the conditions attached to the grant or the way the tax on the stipend was handled (referring to whether or not taxes were withheld).

The follow-up survey of applicants indicates that 16% of the youth who were selected for YSC projects, but did not participate, thought the YSC project did not pay enough. Eight percent of those who discontinued dropped out for financial reasons. Also, 9% of those who said they were dissatisfied with their project mentioned the deduction of taxes as a reason.

Several key informants agreed that stipends were too low in the past, but pointed out that since new terms and conditions were introduced in April 1997, most stipends are the equivalent of minimum wage and, where they are not adequate, projects have the flexibility to draw from some of the completion grant to increase the stipend.

Flexibility is the key word for YSC's current structure and processes. The delegation of approval authority has been transferred to the regions and HRCCs. Less rigid rules affect many features: the minimum number of participants per project (no longer 10); the age limit of youth (now 15-30); the upper limit of total compensation to youth (no more than $10,000 is allowed); the administration of the completion grant (HRCCs have the choice of transferring this responsibility to the project sponsor or administering it them-selves); and the mix in the proportions of stipend and completion grant. HRCC staff may play a proactive role in YSC project development and maintenance. This may include assisting sponsors with project proposals, implementing project selection criteria, providing ongoing assistance to projects and verifying completion grants.

Key informants were generally very positive about these developments in the administration of the program. The benefit of the new administrative structure is greater "buy-in" and certainty at the local level. Regional and local HRDC respondents indicated that since the new rules came into effect, more projects are being approved at a faster rate.

Sponsors can plan to recruit and get under way with much less delay. This has also affected the ability of sponsors to advertise for recruits (too risky before because sponsors did not have the assurance to go ahead). As word of the new flexibility spreads, it was suggested, new sponsors are being drawn into YSC.

The disadvantage of decentralization for HRDC is that program staff know less about what is happening in individual YSC projects across the country. And from a regional perspective, consultants may not see monitoring reports prepared by HRCC staff. Others commented that the increased flexibility could lead to less emphasis on what they perceived to be critical components of YSC. They would be concerned if YSC focused solely on job experience and did not provide life skills and career planning.

The interviews with HRCC staff and the focus groups with sponsors and coordinators showed a considerable degree of variation in the implementation of YSC across the country and even within a single region. There is clearly a need to clarify what is to be understood by potential for "sustainability" and "leaving a legacy" with respect to the criteria for funding projects. Some use legacy in the sense of a commitment in the proposal to carry on some of the benefits of the project (by volunteers if necessary). Others seem to interpret it as the willingness of the sponsoring organization to continue a youth project without additional funding. The implications for the sponsor are very different.

Some of the variation may be a result of the increased flexibility of the guidelines and the fact that most HRCC staff are not exclusively concerned with YSC, but have responsibilities over the entire Youth Employment Initiative — and more.

Reaching the intended target youth population

All sponsoring organizations publicized their projects within the community as part of the recruitment process. The most frequent method (74% of sponsors) was the use of mass media (radio, TV and newspapers). Posters, flyers and signs were used by more than one-third, with a similar proportion using other organizations and networking. More than half used HRCCs or employment centres as methods of spreading the word through the community to reach potential youth participants.

Applicants indicated that various media were, indeed, the most frequent source of awareness of the YSC project, followed by word of mouth and HRCCs. Although educational institutions were used to some extent by sponsors, they played a small role for applicants. The same may be said for other social organizations. This perspective reflects a criticism raised in the focus group of non-participating organizations. This group felt that project sponsors did not communicate well or in a timely fashion with this community, and it was felt that the opportunity for the referral of appropriate clients was often missed.

Almost four-fifths of the project sponsors said that they made special efforts to attract particular youth groups; the remaining fifth apparently used only the target age group and the general program objectives as guides. Those who made special efforts reported looking for younger youth (ages 15-21), older youth (22-30), young people with volunteer experience, Aboriginal youth and members of visible minorities to roughly the same

degree (i.e. between 30% and 50% of mentions). More sponsors mentioned targeting social assistance recipients and high school dropouts and fewer mentioned young offenders and persons with disabilities.

Regional differences are evident in the targeting: Quebec and Atlantic region sponsors were most interested in finding high school dropouts; Quebec sponsors sought older youth in preference to younger ones; sponsors in the Prairies and B.C. looked for Aboriginal youth; and B.C. and Ontario sponsors looked for visible minorities. Persons with disabilities were most frequently mentioned by Atlantic and B.C. sponsors.

About half of the sponsors in B.C. and the Prairies indicated that they did not achieve their targets completely. Although sponsors elsewhere said they were much more satisfied with their recruitment of target groups, the results of the baseline survey suggest only partial success. Although recruitment was on target with respect to most of the criteria, projects did less well in finding Aboriginal youth and persons with disabilities.

The actual distribution of participants is as follows:

- Age: 4.5% of the participants were less than 18 years and 2.5 % were older than 25 years of age at time of application.
- Gender: 57.9% female.
- Less than high school completion: 17.8%.
- Previous volunteer experience: 63.9%.
- Unemployed and looking for work: 57%.
- In receipt of income from social assistance: 25%.
- In receipt of unemployment insurance: 7%.
- Visible minority status: 19%.
- Member of an Aboriginal group: 1.5%.
- Activity limited by long-term physical or mental condition: 3.2%.

Note that in the data above, the proportion of Aboriginal youth is likely an underestimate because many Aboriginal projects did not return the baseline survey. It should also be noted that one focus group participant reported that it was more difficult to find recruits for a group of youth with special needs, as there were already other programs in the community for these clients.

One important aspect of the targeting issue is obscured by the overall statistics. This is the question of the mix of "high-risk" and other youth **within** projects. The small sample of sponsors and coordinators who participated in the focus groups represented two distinctly different types of projects that may be characteristic of YSC projects across the country. Of the projects represented in the groups, roughly half were directed at "high-risk" youth: for example, a project for 17 to 19 year olds with substance abuse problems and very few connections with the world of work, and another that attracted mainly female participants who had been in trouble with the law.

On the other hand, many projects drew from a different kind of clientele, mainly youth with market entry problems or uncertainties about their work futures. The factors influencing the development of, and recruitment for, projects of this type were the objectives of the project itself and the community to be served. Projects providing services, especially to children and the elderly, had to recruit youth without criminal records, and often with a sufficient level of education and experience to be presentable and effective in the project. Some sponsors deliberately recruited a mix of university students and dropouts, to enhance the process of mentoring within the project.

Most sponsors received large numbers of applications (one mentioned 50 applications, another 60); others had to work harder to fill their quotas. The projects that targeted high-risk young offenders aimed to take the best prospects available, knowing that the project could not survive the presence of the most difficult cases.

Youth satisfaction with YSC

An important evaluation question linked to program delivery is whether youth participants essentially liked their YSC projects.

When asked for an overall assessment of their YSC project, 55% of youth participants said they were very satisfied and a further 37% were fairly satisfied. This yields a very high average satisfaction score of 6.45 on a 7-point scale. There were no noteworthy differences related to age, gender or region.

The few youth who were dissatisfied (less than 8%) were asked what bothered them. These participants identified the following factors (multiple responses possible):

- Coordinator or supervisor 46%
- Project organization 43%
- Poor work experience 28%
- Amount of the payment 16%
- Pay, wage or salary 10%
- Deduction of taxes 9%

- Lack of support from YSC, HRDC or the sponsor 9%
- Negative comments about participants 9%

Older participants more often mentioned negative reactions to the coordinator or supervisor (60%); females were more likely than males to mention project organization (49%) and poor work experience (37%), but males were a little more likely than females to complain about the amount of the payment (21% compared with 14%).

The high level of general satisfaction among participants is reflected in the high ratings given to the perceived usefulness of certain skills and experiences gained through the project. Table 2.1 shows the rating in rank order. Highest ranked was "get work" (5.99 on a 7-point scale); lowest ranked was helping to "get more confidence" (4.81). The low ranking for this last item is likely a reflection of the fact that many respondents experienced fairly high levels of self-confidence prior to starting the project.

TABLE 2.1
Average Rated Usefulness of Certain Skills and Experiences (on a 7-Point Scale)

Get work	5.99
Learn how to work as a member of a team	5.76
Develop a desire for further education	5.75
Get general job skills, such as managing time	5.41
Focus your goals	5.39
Develop awareness of community issues and concerns	5.27
Gain organization skills	5.19
Develop a career plan	5.17
Get specific knowledge, such as learning how to do a certain job	5.17
Develop a broader network of contacts	5.07
Get more confidence in yourself and your abilities	4.81

On 10 of the 11 items for which the usefulness rating was assessed, those who left the project before the end gave lower average ratings. No clear pattern in the ratings was associated with gender or age, but there was a tendency for Atlantic participants to give high ratings on almost all items.

When level of satisfaction with YSC projects is compared between those who completed and those who stayed almost to the end, a somewhat higher proportion of leavers were "not very or not at all satisfied" (20% compared with 7% of completers). However, the overall mean level of satisfaction of leavers is still high, indicating that dissatisfaction with the project as such is indeed confined to a few participants. About 11% of dropouts later participated in a variety of federal and other youth programs.

Key informants and sponsors were unanimous that — apart from some concerns about stipends — the bulk of projects were successful and youth were very satisfied. Sponsors and coordinators were asked to rate the success of their projects from a youth perspective. On a 7-point scale, where 7 represented highly successful, 93% rated the success at 5 or better. Project retention rates confirm the positive assessment of both youth participants and sponsors and coordinators.

Project retention rates and reasons for leaving

Program documentation of project retention rates does not exist. The best estimate, which is provided by the survey of sponsors and coordinators, indicates a discontinuation rate of 13%. The average number of participants starting projects was 14, with a low of 10 and a high of 25; the average number completing projects was 13, with a low of 7 and a high of 24. In all, sponsors reported 1,563 participants starting and 1,359 completing, for a discontinuation rate of 13%.

Although sponsors said that some youth were terminated for lack of interest or inappropriate behaviour, the largest proportion left projects not because they were unhappy, but because they found employment.

Two types of project leavers are identified: 6.7% of youth respondents who stayed almost to the end of the project and an additional 9.3% whom we call "dropouts" — those leaving "fairly early" (3.7%) or "midway" through (5.6%).

The three most frequently cited reasons for leaving given by "dropouts" were employment (39%), negative reactions to the coordinator or program (28%) (such as personality conflict or finding the project boring or mismanaged), and practical problems (such as family reasons and moving, totalling 17%). The most frequent explanations from those who stayed almost to the end were employment (30%) and returning to school (28%). Financial problems accounted for only a small proportion of explanations for leaving projects (8%).

We also developed estimates of the determinants of completing the program using a multivariate model. Since the dependent variable is a binary (0,1) variable indicating whether or not a specific individual completed the program, a logistic regression framework is used instead of ordinary least squares. The determinate variables are demographic and attitudinal characteristics drawn from the pre-project baseline survey. The complete list of variables used in the regression models for program completion are shown in Appendix C.

Our analysis revealed that relatively few of the variables in this model are significantly related to completing the program. In terms of the development of the program, it is interesting to note that more recent participants were more likely to complete. This variable achieved a high level of statistical significance.

Other variables that are statistically significant and associated with a higher probability of completion are:

- participants in Quebec;
- participants who said that they applied to YSC to get job experience; and
- participants who rate their own personal qualities more highly.

2.3 Conclusions

Youth Service Canada responds to a real and continuing social problem — exceptionally high levels of youth unemployment and underemployment. Its rationale is grounded in the notion of offering youth the chance to gain work experience through community service projects that stress personal development, career development and work and life skills. The projects appear to be especially well adapted to communities where few employers can offer youth work experience; they also have the potential to meet the needs of younger youth, many of whom are passed over in the labour market. Very few programs with structures and objectives like YSC exist as alternatives for youth.

The more flexible design and implementation of YSC since April 1997 has responded well to the concerns of youth participants, HRDC staff at all levels, and sponsors and coordinators. Data on the demographic characteristics of participants show that, apart from persons with disabilities, YSC projects did well in attracting their target populations.

Program flexibility leads to greater "buy in" by community groups than previously occurred. On the other hand, there is variation in practices between and even within regions and it is difficult for headquarters to get a clear picture of what is happening in the program from a national perspective.

Key informants, sponsors and coordinators, and youth agree that YSC participants like their projects. Relatively high retention rates and very high satisfaction ratings in the survey confirm this assessment. Completion rates are higher among participants in more recently funded projects, suggesting that sponsors are now better able to identify youth who are suited to YSC projects. Many still feel that the stipend is too low for older youth and those not living at home.

3. Program Success

As noted in Chapter 1, achievement of overall program objectives is indicated by the extent to which participants either find or create a job, or continue their education once their project has ended. However, the determination of the success of a program often depends on the objectives whose achievement are given most weight.

In the focus groups with representatives of non-participating youth organizations, some differences in emphasis on success indicators emerged. The consensus was that employment and return to school should stand as the primary indicators of success for their own projects and as a standard against which to assess YSC.

Those dealing with especially high-risk clientele responded as many key informants and sponsors did, emphasizing that "softer outcomes" were all that could be expected. Although project completion was not viewed as enough, they argued that success for high-risk youth must be viewed on a continuum — at one end of which (for a drug dependent "street kid", for example) may be staying alive. The success indicators of YSC, both economic and non-economic, are examined in detail in this chapter.

3.1 Labour Market Outcomes

Did participants differ from non-participants before the project?

Since many of the conclusions about program impact are drawn from comparisons of participants and non-participants, it is useful to look first at the similarities and differences between the two groups. Two data sources are the basis of the comparison: the baseline survey that was administered to applicants before selection to the projects in the period from program start-up in the summer of 1995 to April 1997, and the results of a survey of applicants conducted in the spring of 1998, at a time when all participants' projects had been completed.

The general conclusion from the baseline survey is that the two groups did not differ greatly from one another in attitudes and skills. They also did not differ significantly in terms of their education levels at the time of application. However, on a few demographic characteristics — some related to the criteria for selection into YSC projects — participants and non-participants did differ. Compared to participants, non-participants have a higher proportion of males (50% as compared with 42%) and a slightly higher proportion of applicants who were older than 23 years of age. Other distinguishing characteristics follow:

- **Experience of volunteer work:** 63.9% of participants had prior volunteer work experience, compared with 54.4% of non-participants.

- **Annual Earnings:** Although the number of weeks employed full-time and part-time in the year prior to the project did not vary significantly, the average annual earnings of working non-participants were higher than for working participants ($6737.53 compared with $5,947.54).

- **Unemployed and looking for work:** 68.6% of non-participants were unemployed and looking for work at the time of their application, compared with 56.5% of participants. Participants were slightly more inclined to be employed. The proportions attending school were identical.

- **Future work or school orientation:** Non-participants were more inclined to say their future plans were to find a job (43.4% compared with 34.0%), whereas participants were slightly more inclined to say they would go back to school (42.5% compared with 33.5%).

Analysis of a set of 14 attitudinal items designed to explore dimensions of perceptions of self — which we have termed self-esteem, fatalism, work orientation and dependence — shows no statistically significant differences between the two groups.

On 23 points of comparison on a series of questions about the frequency of use of certain job-related skills, as well as ratings of one's skills in these areas, participants and non-participants showed statistically significant differences (at .05 or better) on only 4 items.

- Participants were somewhat less likely to:

  — read newspapers frequently;

  — like working with numbers; and

  — rate highly their abilities to use various types of equipment.

- Participants were somewhat more likely to participate frequently in team or group activities.

Some of the differences between participants and non-participants are in the direction that would be expected to emerge in a selection interview. Participants were more likely to be in the target age range, have volunteer experience, earn lower pay and favour team activities. On the other hand, non-participants were more job-oriented and had a higher proportion unemployed and looking for work at the time of application.

Most of the questions in the follow-up survey relate to variables that are potentially affected by participation. The one that is not shows no difference between participants and non-participants. It might be expected that some applicants who were not selected for YSC projects would end up in other youth programs. However, non-participants were no more likely than participants to indicate participation in other youth programs after applying to YSC (7% in both cases).

Employment impacts: labour force status at two points in time

Tables 3.1 and 3.2 provide two perspectives on the employment effects of YSC. They show the labour force status of participants and non-participants at the end of the project[3] and at the time of the survey in March 1998.

The immediate post-project results indicate that both dropouts (48%) and those who stayed nearly to the end (51%) were more frequently employed in a job than completers (37%). Self-employed status was similar, as were being unemployed and not looking for work, volunteering and participating in a youth employment program. Relatively few in any category were unemployed and not looking for work. The results for those leaving just before the end and for dropouts are predictable in light of other information; many left for jobs, or — in the case of those leaving just before the end of projects — to return to school.

Table 3.2, which shows the labour force status of participants and non-participants at the time of the survey, reveals a number of important points:

- When compared with their immediate post-project status, a larger proportion of completers are now employed (5% are now self-employed and 50% are employed in a job).

Fewer completers are unemployed. This is true both for those looking for work (15%), and those not looking for work (6%).

- When completers are compared with others in the table, employment levels are slightly lower than for both dropouts and non-participants. However, dropouts and non-participants also have greater proportions of unemployed.

A distinguishing feature of current labour force status is that more completers (especially the younger ones) were in school or training at the time of the survey than dropouts and non-participants.

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3 This is a pseudo-end date for non-participants, linked to the time when participants left their projects. The average length of the period between the end date and the survey was 13.52 months for participants and 13.19 months for non-participants.

TABLE 3.1
Labour Force Status After Completing or Leaving Project

Labour Force Status After Completing or Leaving Project	Project Status					
	Completer (N = 761)		Stayed Almost to End (61)		Drop-Out (86)	
	N**	%*	N**	%*	N**	%*
Unemployed and looking for work	176	23	8	13	20	24
Unemployed and not looking for work	55	7	5	8	9	11
Employed in job	280	37	31	51	41	48
Self-employed	39	5	5	8	3	4
In school/on training	216	28	23	38	16	19
Volunteering	61	8	1	2	8	9
Participating in youth employment program	11	1	1	2	3	3

*Percentages add to more than 100 because of some multiple responses.
**Numbers add to more than total because of some multiple responses.

TABLE 3.2
Labour Force Status at Time of Survey — All Respondents

Labour Force Status at Time of Survey	Project Status							
	Completer (N = 761)		Stayed Almost to End (61)		Drop-Out (86)		Non-Participant (334)	
	N**	%*	N**	%*	N**	%*	N**	%*
Unemployed and looking for work	114	15	12	20	18	21	66	20
Unemployed and not looking for work	43	6	7	11	8	9	20	6
Employed in job	383	50	27	44	49	58	179	54
Self-employed	34	5	3	5	2	2	9	3
In school/on training	255	34	18	30	22	26	81	24
Volunteering	48	6	2	3	4	5	23	7
Participating in youth employment program	2	3	1	2	2	2	5	2

*Percentages add to more than 100 because of some multiple responses.
**Numbers add to more than total because of some multiple responses.

Examination of the regional results shows that among participants, proportions employed were lowest in the Atlantic (37%) and B.C. (42%), where the proportions in school were also highest. Regional differences in the proportion unemployed and looking for work were also evident, ranging from a high of 23% in the Atlantic to 9% in Ontario.

Comparison of the data in Tables 3.1 and 3.2 reveals some interesting changes in labour force status during the time period between participants' completing or leaving the project and the follow-up survey. For completers, the percentage unemployed and looking for work dropped from 23% to 15%, the percentage employed in a job (meaning, not self-employed) rose from 37% to 50% and the percentage in school or training rose from 28% to 34%. For those who stayed nearly to the end, the percentage unemployed and looking for work rose from 13% to 20%, the percentage employed in a job dropped from 51% to 44% and the percentage in school or training dropped from 38% to 30%. Finally, for dropouts, the percentage unemployed and looking for work dropped slightly, (from 24% to 21%), the percentage employed rose from 48% to 58% and the percentage in school or training rose from 19% to 26%. These data suggest that, in general, the circumstances of completers and dropouts improved between their project end dates and the time of the survey. In contrast, those who stayed in their projects almost to the end appear to have lost ground.

The quality of entry level jobs

The majority of youth obtained their entry level job after the project at relatively low skill requirements. Most jobs held by participants who completed or stayed nearly to the end were in skilled (e.g., bricklayer, carpenter, cook, plumber) and unskilled (e.g., caretaker, labourer, messenger) occupations and less than half were full time:

	Participants (N=348)	Dropouts (N=44)	Non-Participants (N=153)
Professional	4.9%	9.1%	2.6%
Business executive/ owner or manager	2.9%	4.5%	2.0%
Salesperson	12.9%	4.5%	12.4%
Clerical worker	16.4%	18.2%	16.3%
Skilled worker	33.0%	29.5%	34.0%
Unskilled worker	27.3%	31.8%	32.7%

A comparison with dropouts shows that a slightly larger proportion of early leavers had higher skill level jobs, but at the same time they had a somewhat higher proportion of unskilled labouring jobs. Non-participants had slightly higher proportions of skilled and unskilled labourers.

Younger participants were more likely than older ones (37% compared with 19%) to have unskilled jobs; females were more likely than males to have clerical jobs and less likely to have skilled labouring jobs. From a regional perspective, larger proportions of participants west of Ontario had skilled labouring jobs.

More than half of the employed participants worked in part-time jobs (i.e., those less than 35 hours a week). The results for responding completers are as follows (the distribution for non-participants followed a similar pattern):

	Participants (N = 348)	Non-Participants (N = 153)
Worked 1-15 hours in first job	12%	12%
Worked 16-25 hours	16%	18%
Worked 26-35 hours	24%	24%
Worked more than 35 hours	46%	44%

On a related subject, when youth participants employed at the time of the survey were asked whether they consider their current job as only temporary or as a step toward a career goal, almost half described it as temporary.

Impacts of the projects on job-related skills

Thirty-one percent of completers stated that the skills and experience gained in the project were "very useful" in getting the first post-project job. Ontario participants were more likely than others to find the skills learned and experiences acquired "not at all useful" (50% compared with 33% overall) and those from the Prairies usually found them "very useful" (44%).

Participants working after the project were asked about the skills used on the job. The skills explored were those that projects were known to emphasize. Table 3.3 lists in order of frequency of mention the skills used on the post-project job. It shows that "people skills" are most often mentioned, but that specific job-related skills such as working with computers or other new technology were also significant.

TABLE 3.3
Main Skills Used on the First Post-Project Job in Order of Frequency of Mention — All Participants

Skills Used	%
Communication skills	82
Teamwork skills	79
Work with numbers	59
Reading and writing	57
Business skills	51
Working with computers/other technology	47

These skills were more frequently mentioned by older participants and by females, a result that may well be related to the type of work — whether unskilled labouring or not — that also varied between these groupings of participants.

Returning to school

For those not working, formal education rather than job training was the more frequent route for participants immediately after completing their projects: 38% pursued a college diploma program; 23% a university degree program; and 19% aimed to finish high school.

Enrollment in a college diploma program was also the favourite level of education being pursued at the time of the survey (46% of participants in school). More than a quarter (27%) of those in school were pursing a university degree and 10% were finishing high school.

Financial dependence after the project

Unemployed youth participants required some form of financial assistance after the project, but relatively few were on Social Assistance or Employment Insurance (EI). Fourteen percent of non-participants received EI — having worked and then become unemployed in the period since not being admitted to the YSC project.

Table 3.4 shows that less than one-fifth of completers were in receipt of social assistance: about the same as the non-participants, but a smaller proportion than among dropouts. Dependence on parental assistance and some other form of income support (other than social assistance or EI) was significant across all three youth groups, with more than one-third reporting receiving help of both types.

TABLE 3.4
Types of Income Support Received by Youth Not Working After Leaving Project — Completers, Dropouts and Non-Participants

Type of Assistance	Completers/ Almost to End (N = 515)	Dropouts (N = 45)	Non-Participants N = (206)
Social Assistance	17%	29%	18%
Employment Insurance	4%	4%	14%
Parental assistance	37%	40%	39%
Some other form of income support	35%	38%	34%

Male participants were a little more likely to depend on parental support, as were youth less than 23 years of age. The younger participants had almost no EI support, as they had met neither the hours nor duration requirements for EI. Otherwise, there were no gender or age-related patterns.

Problems finding work

Key informants, sponsors, coordinators and youth participants agreed on the main reasons why youth remain unemployed or on income support after the project:

- Lack of available opportunities (especially in isolated and/or Aboriginal communities) — most frequently mentioned.

- Mismatch of their limited skills and local labour market needs (or, as participants put it, a lack of skills).

- The project was not long enough to make a difference in some lives. (The more YSC projects recruit those who need the most basic work orientation, self-esteem, and development skills, the less likely it will be that completers will make a rapid transition to work. Many may not even be up to the standard required to make a transition to further education at this point. Others may need an internship or a second YSC-like project.)

- Practical difficulties, such as family duties and transportation.

Most unemployed participants were optimistic about getting paid work in the next six months; on the other hand, youth who were employed in jobs they considered only temporary cited lack of education or experience and lack of jobs in their field as the principal explanations.

Multivariate analysis of labour market variables

a) Overview

This section of our report provides the results of the multivariate assessment of the impact of the YSC program. The models estimated include data for all participants (including some that left before completing the program) and members of a comparison group. This group consists of youth who applied to but did not participate in the projects.

In this section, the key analytical issue is to estimate the probable labour market performance of YSC participants in the absence of the program. These estimates are developed from regression models using observations on the participants and the comparison group. This is a more robust procedure for estimating program impacts than using, for example, just pre- versus post-program out-come measures for the participants alone, in that the comparison group represents what would have happened to participants in the absence of YSC.

b) Estimation methods

Multivariate models were developed to estimate the impact of participation in YSC on the following variables:

- Annualized earnings;

- Weekly wage rate;

- Hours worked per week;

- Proportion of post-program time in the labour force;
- Proportion of post-program time employed;
- Proportion of post-program time in school or training;
- Annual EI benefits collected; and
- Annual social assistance collected.

In order to meet assumptions underlying the regression methods, the three variables defined as proportions of post-program time were modeled as the logarithm of the odds ratios of the proportions: log (p/[1-p]).

Further, we used instrumental variables[4] in the estimation, which is a well-published method to correct for selection bias, a problem that arises when personal characteristics that tend to foster better labour market performance after being in a program could also increase significantly the chances that a person is chosen to participate in the program.

The regression models upon which we based the results reported here, therefore, employed instrumental variables in a two-stage least squares procedure to estimate the parameters. The basic model had the form:

$$Y = a + bX + cP + dY_{t-1} + e,$$

where a, b, c, and d are parameters to be estimated, e represents unexplained variation, and:

- Y = the measure upon which we wish to estimate the effect of participation in YSC. (Note: the subscript t-1 in the equation indicates the same measure in the year before the YSC project.)
- X = a series of personal characteristics, including[5] gender, age, region, education, presence of dependent children, presence of a disability, participation in extra-curricular activities while at school, and volunteer work in the year before YSC.
- P = 1 if the person participated in a project, 0 otherwise.

Estimates of the effect of participation in a YSC project are provided by the estimated value of the parameter c in the above model. We performed statistical tests of significance

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4 A regression equation to explain participation in YSC is used to estimate an instrument for the participation dummy variable.

5 Some models contained additional variables that were relevant to the particular measure being modeled. The full list of variables used in the different models appear in Appendix C.

on this parameter estimate for each of the models reported here to determine whether the value estimated from the observed data differs through more than just random variation.

c) Summary of results for labour market variables

This section summarizes the estimated effects of participation in YSC on the above-listed variables associated with the performance of participants in the labour market. As displayed in Table 3.5, the regression results are mainly neutral but present a consistent picture of program effects.

TABLE 3.5
Estimated Impacts of YSC Participation

Impact measure	Effect	% Effect	Significance level
Annualized earnings	$503	4.8%	0.493
Weekly wage	$25	9.1%	0.158
Hours worked per week	0.98	3.0%	0.470
Proportion of time in labour force	-0.095*	-10.5%	0.000
Proportion of time employed	-0.059*	-7.7%	0.046
Proportion of time in school or training	.096*	46.4%	0.001
Annual EI benefits	-$185*	-42.9%	0.024
Annual SA benefits	-$75	-8.2%	0.276

* Following conventional practice, effects with significance levels below .05 are considered to have arisen from factors other than random variation; lower values indicate more significant effects.

In the short term, participation in YSC had no statistically significant effect for the time period studied on annualized earnings, weekly wage, hours worked per week, or annual social assistance benefits. In other words, the estimates of program effect on these measures could easily have resulted from random variation or chance, and cannot be reliably attributed to participation in YSC.

Note that the analysis attributes to YSC a reduction of 0.095 in the proportion of time spent in the labour force. Given that participants, on average, spent 0.808 of the time in the labour force after leaving their YSC projects, this implies that they would have been in the labour force 0.903 of the time in the absence of YSC. Put another way, as shown in Table 3.5, this estimate may be viewed as a reduction of 10.5% (0.095/0.903) in the proportion of time spent in the labour force. This estimate has a very low significance level, indicating it is extremely unlikely that it could have been observed through random variation in the sampled data. The estimates for the next two measures help explain this effect.

The regression analysis leads to an estimated reduction of 0.059 in the proportion of time employed. In this case, participants were employed, following their projects, 0.707 of the time. Therefore, had YSC not been available, they would have been employed 0.766 of the time, and thus experienced a reduction of 7.7% in the proportion of time employed. This estimate also has a very low significance level, indicating a very low probability that it occurred by chance.

At the same time, the regression models show an increase of 0.096 in the proportion of time spent in school or on training. Participants, on average, were in school or on training 0.302 of the time. In the absence of YSC, the analysis indicates this proportion would have been only 0.206. Therefore, expressed in percentage terms, participation in YSC resulted in an increase of 46% in this proportion. Once again, the significance level of 0.001 indicates a very low likelihood that this effect occurred by chance and that one may accept the estimate with great confidence. This finding also shows that the proportion of time in the labour force and in employment was reduced as a result of participation in YSC mainly because it also led to an increase in the proportion of time in school or training.

The analysis also estimates that employment insurance benefits were $183 lower per year as a result of participation in YSC. Participants averaged $244 in EI benefits, on an annual basis, after their projects, compared to $427 they would have received in the absence of the program. These figures translate to a percentage reduction in EI benefits of 42.9%, with a very low probability that this effect was observed by chance. This result is also quite consistent with the previous ones, in the sense that participants who worked less and went to school more would be eligible for less in the way of EI benefits.

In recognition of the limited post-program time period covered by this evaluation, HRDC plans to follow up with participants and comparison group members in order to test for economic and employment impacts over the longer term.

3.2 Non-economic Impacts

Impacts on motivation, self-esteem, and other attitudes

Most key informants felt that program success measures should include not only whether participants found a job or returned to school — two key program objectives — but also whether youth had progressed in their personal development and improved their life skills. The latter are, of course, also program objectives.

Project sponsors and coordinators gave their projects high marks for achieving a number of personal development objectives: encouraging a positive attitude to work, encouraging participants' personal development, increasing their self-esteem and providing transferable skills. To assess the extent of this type of program impact, we carried out a multivariate analysis of several non-economic outcome variables. These variables are particularly important given the broad objectives of YSC that extend beyond a simple focus on economic impacts.

The analysis reported in this section is possible only because of the early decision to capture baseline data on a wide range of non-economic variables for participants and members of the comparison group (the non-participants). Collection of data at these two points in time for the two groups allows a detailed analysis that is not part of most evaluation studies.

Multivariate models similar to those used to measure labour market impacts were developed to estimate the impact of participation in YSC on the following variables:[6]

- Frequency of reading newspapers and magazines.
- Frequency of using a personal computer.
- Frequency of participation in team activities.
- Ability to read newspapers and magazines.
- Ability to convey meaning in writing.
- Ability to do arithmetic.
- Ability to lead discussions.
- Ability to use a personal computer.
- Ability to work in a team setting.
- Ability to contribute.
- Willingness to admit not working.
- Attitude to being unemployed.
- Ability to do things as well as others.
- Expectation of getting what they want from life.
- Would take a better job even if it meant spending less time with family.

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6 The equations are estimated using ordinary least squares with the dependent variable being a scale variable reflecting gradations in each measure. The data reflect the responses of both participants and members of the comparison group. The dependent variable is the response in the 1998 survey for each respondent with the baseline response appearing as an explanatory variable. In effect, this is very much like estimating a change variable (for example, a changed attitude about work or a change in the perceived ability to use a personal computer). The regression model shows the extent to which such changes may be greater for participants than for members of the comparison group.

- Attitude to receiving Social Assistance as opposed to working.
- Willingness to accept a better job if it required moving.
- Perspective on own good qualities.
- Knows how to find job.
- Doesn't want government support.
- Has a positive attitude about self.
- Believes that getting job depends on being in right place at right time.
- Relies on self to solve problems.

In the regression results, few of the models show a statistically significant impact on participants. This is consistent with the literature in this area, in which it is common not to find statistically significant relationships. In part, this is because many attitudes will not be susceptible to change, particularly in a relatively short program. However, program participation does have a statistically significant impact on the following variables:

- Increased ability to use personal computer.
- Less likely to turn down a better job if it means having to move.
- More likely to know how to find a job.
- More likely to have a positive attitude about self.
- Less likely to think that chance elements determine getting a job.

Although program impacts that are statistically significant are limited to only five of the possible 23 variables that we estimated, most of the significant impacts appear plausibly linked to YSC program activities. In particular, improvements in the ability to use computers and in job finding skills are tied to project activities — such as team meetings, data analysis and report writing — that most participants take part in.

These improvements, in addition to the program's emphasis on career planning and on job search techniques, would lead participants to say that they are now more likely to be able to find a job compared to what their responses would have been in the absence of the program.

The most significant effect related to youth participants' views of themselves that is attributable to the YSC experience appears to be the increased confidence in knowing how to find a job. The program activities — stressing job search skills and other employability

requirements — appear to have paid off. Interestingly, other "softer out-comes," such as building self-esteem, did not change significantly as a result of participation in YSC.

Community effects

a) Meeting community needs

Some regional and local HRDC staff found it difficult to assess how well projects did in meeting community needs. Discussions of the nature of projects in focus groups indicated that the type of community needs served varied widely and, in some cases, the needs of youth and the needs of the community were seen as equivalent.

A general point made was that since community-based organizations approach HRDC, projects must be addressing some community needs. Interviews revealed that in some cases, HRCC staff promote YSC activities and have approached community service agencies with ideas for projects and encouraged their participation. These officials usually make substantial efforts to assure themselves that the project enjoys local support — even before it is funded. Most key informants indicated that projects receive positive feedback from their communities.

b) Providing incremental benefits

As noted earlier, few YSC-like projects would have been undertaken without HRDC funding. Several provinces offer services to youth and career planning, but not programming of the YSC type.

Several representatives of non-participating youth organizations praised the YSC projects they knew about as doing some things their youth programming could not — for example, teaching community development or teaching youth to develop Web sites. A brief discussion of why those organizations had not applied to YSC provides evidence of YSC's incremental benefits. Focus group respondents said that YSC rules were quite inflexible, and that the projects would require a great deal of extra input from organizations in terms of time and money. They stressed that the YSC approach to a project "takes very high skills on the part of the coordinator and a lot of administrative support from the (sponsoring) organization." This is because they recognized that to get funding a YSC project "had to be innovative."

Some key informants felt that sponsors were more likely to set up projects that benefit them — but not the community and its youth. But the "way the program is set up forces sponsors to look at the community and assess needs." Some informants expressed the hope that as community agencies come to recognize the value of such projects they may be inclined to undertake some on their own, without YSC funding and on a much smaller scale.

However, as several key informants indicated, these community agencies often have few internal resources and depend largely on government funding for their survival. Besides, several key informants said that there is less emphasis now on the need for projects to become self-sufficient. Some regional coordinators appear to recognize that funding will

be necessary to cover stipends and bonuses for the participants, but they expect the sponsors to begin to cover all the administrative costs. This approach is consistent with HRDC's growing emphasis on partnerships.

c) Youth involvement in community activities

Project sponsors and coordinators felt that their projects had successfully increased the participant's awareness of their communities and the issues affecting them. One-third of respondents held that they had done so "completely" and 43% said they had done so "to a major extent." Projects were successful if youth learned more about their communities and made important contacts from working with other community agencies. As one respondent noted, "at least they were able to get their foot in the door and establish contacts with people who could potentially hire them later."

For YSC to demonstrate achievement of its goals, one element should be the extent of volunteerism displayed by participants after the end of the project. The results of the follow-up survey show that, indeed, a majority of participants were volunteering in their communities after finishing their projects.

For comparative purposes, both non-participants and participants were asked whether they had done any unpaid volunteer work or community service since the project ended. We note that, at the time of the baseline survey, roughly the same proportion of non-participants as participants were serving as volunteers. We find that, when all applicants were asked about their volunteering at any time since the project end date,[7] a statistically significant higher proportion of participants (excluding those who left before their projects ended) compared with non-participants were volunteers: 54% of participants as opposed to 46% of non-participants.

The number of hours per week in volunteer activities varied enormously, with a few respondents claiming to volunteer more than 35 hours a week. However, the largest proportion of respondents reported one to five hours, with very little difference in the pattern of response between participants and non-participants.

The evidence does not confirm that the YSC project had a strong impact on volunteerism. Recruitment attracted many youth who were active volunteers prior to the project. They continued to volunteer after the project — but not a great deal more than those who did not participate.

3.3 How Are Project Characteristics Related to Success?

In principle, it would have been attractive to employ a "project type" variable in the multivariate analysis to help assess whether there is any relationship between the characteristics of projects and positive outcomes. Unfortunately the four "project types"

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7 This is a pseudo-end date for non-participants, linked to the time when participants left their projects.

or streams previously used to classify projects for administrative purposes[8] had no clear meaning, as the reality of project development led to a multitude of hybrid variations. Instead, we have looked mainly to qualitative information — from key informants, sponsors, coordinators and representatives of non-participating youth organizations — for an assessment of the relationship between project characteristics and success.

Key informants think that YSC is a good model. Program flexibility "allows a total variation in projects according to community needs" and many youth participants have found a job or returned to school. Some say that looking for self-employment holds out an unrealistic expectation for the vast majority of youth involved.

Most key informants, sponsors and coordinators were careful not to overstate the labour market achievements of YSC. The fax survey showed that far fewer sponsors and coordinators thought the projects had fully achieved the employment and return-to-school objectives than was the case with other, non-economic objectives. Reflecting this assessment, one key informant spoke for many: "we are helping young people, but we cannot assume that they will automatically be hired. We have a well-educated work force and these youth are competing for places with many others."

A high degree of consensus was evident on the factors influencing project success. Of greatest significance to all involved with YSC was the importance of a strong and dedicated coordinator who knows how to avoid making youth participants overly dependent. In addition to recognizing that good projects have to start with a good design, the respondents mentioned that to be successful projects should:

- Address a local community need.
- Show clear "ownership" on the part of the sponsoring organization with links to other partners in the community.
- Set clear objectives and identify measurable outcomes.
- Include components such as personal development and career planning.
- Integrate low-risk clients with high-risk ones to encourage a mentoring relationship.
- Have a good participant identification and referral process.
- Have a well planned project with activities relevant to youth needs.
- Have high staff-to-participant ratios in projects for high-risk youth to allow for social workers and individual counselling.[9]

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8 The four project types were: sustainable development/environment, community development and learning, entrepreneurship and Tulu (personal development projects emphasizing personal and life skills).

9 Discussion with some key informants led to the observation that a case management approach — implying both longer projects and greater costs — would be required.

- Include a follow-up.

- Be able to sustain themselves without government funding.

3.4 Conclusions

Participants and non-participants had many similar characteristics — when they applied for YSC project. Such as labour force experience, work-related attitudes and job-related skills. Our analysis indicates that participation in YSC projects had a positive impact on time spent in school or in training, one of the major objectives of the program. Participation in YSC also reduced reliance on EI benefits. In the short term, estimates of impacts on earnings, wages, hours worked, and reliance on social assistance were not statistically significant for the period of time covered by the evaluation. As previously mentioned, HRDC plans to follow up with YSC participants to test the economic and employment impacts of the program over the long term.

Although a large number of possible non-economic impacts of participation were examined, relatively few impacts were observed. However, the positive effects — increased ability to use a personal computer and belief that they know how to find a job — are all tied to key project activities. Participation in YSC also increased the likelihood of having a positive attitude about oneself, and reduced the likelihood of thinking that finding a job depends on being in the right place at the right time and of turning down a better job if it meant having to move.

At the time of the survey, 55% of project completers were working, as were 49% of those who left their projects just before they ended. YSC participants entered jobs after their projects that had relatively low skill requirements. To about the same extent as non-participants, they found skilled and unskilled labour occupations, with the majority working less than 35 hours a week. People skills learned in the projects, in particular, were seen to be used on the job.

Formal education, rather than training, attracts a large proportion of completers. Relatively few became unemployed and were not looking for work. However, the combination of significant proportions being either in school or unemployed and looking for work meant that many participants required financial assistance after the project, mostly from parents or from some form of income support other than social assistance or EI. In this respect, however, YSC participants were not different from non-participants.

The evidence of positive community effects from YSC projects is mixed. Project sponsors and coordinators felt that their projects did well with respect to the objective of increasing community awareness among youth participants. HRDC staff were generally certain that projects had succeeded in leveraging community support — otherwise they would not be funded by HRDC — but they had less information on how well projects met community needs. A comparison of the post-project involvement of participants and non-participants shows a statistically significant but relatively weak program impact on volunteerism.

A high level of consensus emerged on what it takes to make a good YSC project: a good design and the commitment of the sponsoring organization are important, but a strong and dedicated project coordinator is essential.

4. Program Costs and Suggestions for Change

4.1 Program Costs

Budgetary costs

YSC is an important component of the full range of youth programming provided by the federal government. To provide a perspective on the relative scale of YSC that relates to the time period covered by this evaluation, Table 4.1 shows the number of participants, program expenditures (including departmental overheads) and average costs per participant for YSC, Youth Internship Canada (another HRDC youth program) and all youth initiatives combined. These data are aggregated and cover the time period from the beginning of fiscal year 1994-95 to the end of fiscal year 1996-97.

TABLE 4.1
Youth Program Expenditures (in thousands of dollars) Participants and Average Costs Per Participant

Program	Expenditures	Participants	Per Participant cost
Youth Service Canada	$68,179	8,237	$8,277
Youth Internship Canada	$182,833	48,661	$3,757
All Youth Initiatives	$548,684	186,709	$2,939

Note: The total in the All Youth Initiatives category includes other HRDC programs plus a small quantity of youth programs in other federal departments. (Data, provided by HRDC, cover the time period from April 1994 to March 1997.)

The data in Table 4.1 provide a useful perspective on YSC. While YSC accounts for approximately 12% of total HRDC departmental expenditures on youth programs, it accounts for only 4.4% of participants. This implies a per participant cost for YSC that is almost three times the average for all youth programming. This is not a surprising result, given the nature of the HRDC programs with which YSC is being compared. More than half of HRDC's expenditure on youth programming is for summer programs, which last about twelve weeks and account for approximately 70% of participants. In comparison, most YSC projects had a duration of approximately 30 weeks. Youth Internship Canada, which also reports relatively high average costs per participant, typically involves projects similar in length to those of YSC. In considering average costs per participant, it is also important to note that both Youth Internship Canada and HRDC summer programs typically involve some wage payments to participants by private sector sponsors.

Costs to sponsors and others

Sponsoring organizations offer in-kind help to the projects, in the form of administrative support, space and the like. When asked in the survey, 96% of sponsors and coordinators

said that assistance was given; almost 30% indicated financial assistance, and nearly everyone mentioned in-kind help.

Some projects received much support from other community organizations and some private sector sources. No YSC projects received any significant assistance from other levels of government. The resulting mean for sponsor contributions was estimated to be $795 per participant.

4.2 Suggestions for Change

To complement the analysis of YSC's effectiveness in achieving program objectives, the report concludes with suggestions from youth participants, HRDC staff, sponsors and coordinators and representatives of non-participating youth organizations for improvements to YSC.

Youth participants' views

There is no single burning issue that needs to be addressed, according to youth participants.

Participants were asked fairly early in the survey — before any references were made to project remuneration or other related matters — "if you could identify one thing to improve Youth Service Canada to make it better able to help young persons, what would that be?" A quarter of participants either could not answer or said there was nothing they could suggest to improve YSC. Moreover, among those responding with suggestions, no clear issue emerges.

When a variety of specific answers to the open-ended question are grouped together, the following areas for improvement were mentioned by at least 10% of participants:

- Miscellaneous general program suggestions such as better planning and clearer project definition (19%);
- Improving coordinator/leadership (13%);
- Improving compensation (13%); and
- Improving content (12%).

Further evidence that there is no focus of reforms that need to be addressed from the youth perspective is the fact that the items mentioned for improvement are broadly distributed across participants: no significant response pattern was associated with region, gender or age of participants.

HRDC staff's views

Regional and local HRDC respondents stressed how much happier they are now with YSC since the more flexible terms and conditions were introduced. However, there were a number of suggestions for change.

Several local project officers mentioned the "under-resourcing" of the Youth Employment Initiative. The government, it was said, has made a substantial public commitment to the Youth Employment Initiative that has not been matched in terms of staffing resources at the local level. Devolution of functions to the provinces and reorganization of the federal role has meant that some staff responsible for YSC are able to devote only a tiny fraction of their time to YSC. In other cases, they have acquired YSC responsibilities as a result of a redefinition of job responsibilities that they are not fully equipped to handle.

Several NHQ respondents saw the need to better promote YSC, raise awareness about the program, and give it more visibility — so that people get to recognize the name YSC and associate this name with the concept of community service and youth development. Points of access to the program also need to be improved.[10]

A few further themes relating to change were mentioned by respondents:

- Workshops at the national level for YSC project coordinators should continue. It is good to bring people together to talk about what they are doing and to bring them up-to-date on other projects. (Although one respondent welcomed the shift to the regional level, workshops were not being offered at the regional level in other areas.) It was suggested that materials prepared for the workshops should be provided to the regions and HRCCs.

- Regions should be involved in the actual development of policy, not as commentators on initiatives prepared at the national level.

- Let the Region decide on projects over $150,000; otherwise there are delays in approvals.

- Provide for even more flexibility in the allowable administrative costs.

- Track the results of the emphasis on projects for high-risk youth; as these projects will require more from coordinators.

Sponsors' views

When asked in the fax survey what changes, if any, sponsors and coordinators would like to see to improve the operation of their YSC project, many respondents said "more time!" — in the sense of both longer projects and more time for preparation. More funding and more training for coordinator assistance from HRDC were the other higher ranking concerns. Two aspects of the funding issue were the ceiling on overhead expenses and the

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10 Currently, information about the program states that any youth interested in participating in a YSC project should contact the local HRCC office. However, there is nothing available around the start dates of projects — i.e., an interested youth can call an HRCC office only to learn there are no YSC projects underway. Promotional efforts should be coordinated with the start of YSC projects.

stipends for youth participants. Several respondents also mentioned the problem of the earnings of participants being non-insurable.

Some HRCC officers appear to give quite rigid direction to sponsors. For example, one respondent in a focus group was told that the sponsor could not combine streams once the project had started; others reported that such flexibility had been allowed. Another was told that new projects should not contain an educational or training component. Uncertainty about the new rules and a feeling of being discouraged to submit a new proposal led some focus group sponsors to wonder if they could get official, written guidelines about YSC.

Participating organizations also brought up the need for additional funding, but more in the context of projects that deal with high-risk youth. HRDC must recognize that projects for high-risk youth are necessarily more costly in terms of administrative requirements. As one respondent noted, "It doesn't work if you don't recognize the differences in the target groups."

Other significant suggestions were the following:

- Clarify the rules with respect to what is expected of HRCC (i.e., support to projects and frequency of visitations). Greater consistency among HRCCs, at least in the same province or area, should be required. More interaction with HRCCs staff would be appreciated.

- Many thought that some form of follow-up with participants is needed. Funding might allow for a project reunion as part of "meaningful post-project contact to find out where the kids are." An idea was to set up a placement office that would promote YSC youth.

- Allow a three-year commitment of funds by YSC in order to have a much better impact on the community. There should be time to put down the roots of structures in the community so that the projects have a good chance of continuing.

- Arrange with provincial social assistance to allow women with children and special needs groups to continue to get needed services.

- Give priority to repeat project applications, on the grounds that these organizations have learned how to do the project and will likely do better a second time.

Views of non-participating youth organizations

"Don't keep doing something new." "Be more responsive to what people are already doing." "Support youth organizations with core funding — but insist as a condition that they cooperate with each other." This was the main advice to HRDC from several youth organizations not currently involved in YSC.

Focus group participants were pleased to learn that local HRDC officers have been given more discretion and assumed that "they will be able to identify the existing groups better." But they suggested that they should not be afraid to share information on YSC projects: "we're all serving the same clientele."

4.3 Conclusions

YSC is seen by everyone consulted as a good model of a youth employment program. Compared with short-term, summer employment programs, it has relatively high costs per participant. This evaluation found objective evidence of positive non-economic impacts of YSC participation, particularly with respect to returning to school.

Many of the suggestions for change to YSC can be accommodated without increasing costs, as some would likely come naturally from repeated funding of successful projects. However, the interest of HRDC staff in countering the under-resourcing they identify as a problem, the request for nationally-sponsored workshops and, especially, the higher costs for project sponsors associated with an increased focus on high-risk youth all imply higher project and program costs.

The solution is not necessarily to shift more costs (in-kind and financial) to community organizations. The resources, voluntary and otherwise, used in YSC projects are not available for helping youth in other ways. Essentially, it is a question of the cost-effectiveness of one means of using resources relative to another. In any case, the needs of youth for assistance in making the transition to the labour market will remain with us for some time.

Appendix A: Methodology: Survey of Youth Applicants, Participants and Discontinuants

A. Survey Methodology

The sampling frame for the survey was respondents to the Baseline Survey that was administered to applicants to YSC projects. Data of this type were available on 3,656 youth. Distinguishing successful applicants ("participants") from unsuccessful ones ("non-participants") required identifying participants using SICs from administrative data provided by the Program. Difficulties of selection owing to missing SIC data in the Baseline data and other factors led to the decision to survey what was essentially a census of all applicants and then post-code respondents as participants or non-participants on the basis of their self-identification. However, 120 names were eliminated at the outset because these applicants had previously been surveyed by the YSC program.

The survey proceeded as follows:

- A single survey instrument was developed with appropriate skip patterns to accommodate the responses of participants who completed the project, participants who stayed nearly to the end, early discontinuants ("called dropouts") and non-participants.

- The instrument was pretested on March 8, 1998 and as a result a few changes were made to clarify the youth employment program we were asking about; clarify the identification of the date when participants left the project; and to add a few answer categories which arose during the interviewing.

- The telephone survey was conducted in English and French from March 9 to March 29, 1998, using Canadian Facts' computer-assisted FACTS system. Calling was done from Central Location Telephones in Toronto, Edmonton, London, Quebec City and Bathurst. Callbacks were continued until unproductive (and the field had to be closed in order to keep to the production schedule for tables).

- Open ended questions and items requiring specification were coded, reviewed by the research team, revised and included in tables along with prelisted responses.

The record of call, shown below, indicates that despite efforts to improve contact and tracing of applicants a great many respondents could not be contacted because no active phone number could be obtained.

We started with 3100 unduplicated names and addresses, but 38.2% of these yielded no reply or did not find an applicant, were not in service, or could not generate a number.

Outright refusals by potential respondents were relatively few (4.8%), but respondents who were never available or situations where terminations occurred for a variety of reasons added to that proportion.

A curious category of result is found in the 158 persons who said that they did not apply. This raises questions about how the Baseline surveys were administered within projects, but the outcome may also be explained by some implicit refusals, misperceptions of the process or poor memory of events.

	Number of Cases	%
Completed	1,242	40.1
Engaged	10	.3
No reply	112	3.6
Appointment	34	1.1
Respondent not available	2	.1
Refusal	149	4.8
Language barrier	19	.6
Not in service	469	15.1
Non-residential	72	2.3
Respondent ill/never available	233	7.5
Respondent did not apply	158	5.1
No one by that name and QB (no, refused)	242	7.8
Refusal for giving phone number	9	.3
No phone number obtained	290	9.4
Terminated (other reason)	59	1.9

B. Non-Response Bias Analysis

A logistic regression model indicated several variables from the baseline survey associated with the likelihood of responding to the follow-up survey. The following conditions were associated to a statistically significant degree with greater likelihood of responding:

- Person is located in the Atlantic region.
- The person's future plans include wanting to find a job (Q.20).
- "I'd turn down a better-paying job if I had to move from my community to get it" describes the person's self-image relatively well (Q.21).

- Frequency of reading simple instructions such as in recipes or on packaged goods (Q.22)

The following conditions were associated to a statistically significant degree with lesser likelihood of responding:

- "Being unemployed is one of the worst things I can think of" describes the person's self-image relatively well (Q.21).

- "I know how to find a job" describes the persons self-image relatively well (Q.21).

We tabulated the relative frequencies of response to the follow-up survey for the above-listed variables. For each variable that had several levels of response, the levels were combined, on the basis of similarity of response rates, into just two categories, and the response rates recalculated for the resulting categories. The inverses of these response rates were then applied to data for each of the respondents to the follow-up survey, with an appropriate adjusting factor to ensure that the total weighted sample size was equal to the unweighted sample size (1,242). The weights ranged from 0.68 to 2.05, with a mean (by design) of 1.00.

These weights were then used in all the multivariate analyzes performed. The purpose of doing so was simply to ensure that the people who responded to the follow-up survey represented the baseline population as closely as possible on the basis of characteristics associated with differing response rates to the follow-up survey. For example, the response rate was significantly higher in the Atlantic region than elsewhere in the country. Therefore, responses from that region would receive relatively less weight in the analyzes because they represent fewer people than do responses from other parts of the country.

Appendix B: Methodology: Fax Survey of Sponsors and Coordinators

A. Sample Design

We began the survey with a list of 167 YSC projects which had participated in the baseline data collection, *A Survey of Applicants to YSC Projects*. We eliminated duplication by selecting one project when an organization sponsored more than one YSC project during the baseline survey period. This left 152 projects.

The names in the data file were mainly of sponsor contacts. On the cover page of the questionnaire these contacts were asked to provide a copy of the questionnaire to the actual project coordinator whenever possible.

B. Methodology

Canadian Facts telephone interviewers in our Central Location Telephone (CLT) facilities in Toronto and Montreal then conducted a short telephone inquiry to verify the contact name and fax number. During the course of this inquiry, 12 projects were eliminated as unreachable within the timeframe of this survey. Using the confirmed contact names and fax numbers, the final sample list of 140 was produced in a mail-merge format.

We prepared a fax package consisting of a personalized fax cover page, a questionnaire cover page with YSC project number, and the balance of the questionnaire (pages 2-8). The faxes were sent out on February 24, February 25, and March 9, 1998 (faxing to 24 projects was delayed pending translation and approval of the French version of the questionnaire). Participants were given two weeks from the faxing date to complete the survey and return it by fax (a mailing address was also provided). A 1-800 number was provided for questions.

A one-page reminder fax was sent out to the first two cohorts on March 4, and a second was sent on March 11. The final cohort received one reminder fax, on March 18. Responses received up to March 30 were tabulated.

C. Sample Disposition

Original number of projects in sample	167
Removed for duplication	15
Remaining projects	152
Projects not reachable during telephone confirmation	12
Total excluded from sample frame	27
Organizations indicating they were unable to complete the questionnaire (no one knowledgeable about project)	4
Total potential completions	**136**

Completions:

• Projects returning questionnaires	99
• Completion response rate	73%

A statement on the front cover directed the sponsor recipients of the questionnaire to pass along a copy of the survey to the original project coordinator if he or she was available. As a result, 13 projects submitted two questionnaires:

Total number of questionnaires returned	112

Appendix C: Variables Used in Regression Analysis

The following pages contain the list of variables used in the instrumental-variables regression models. The models were run in three groups to accommodate the patterns of missing values that occurred in the data.

The list below provides brief descriptions of the variable names. For more complete explanations, refer to the text of the questionnaires used for the baseline and follow-up surveys.

Variable	Description
YSC	=1 if YSC participant, 0 if non-participant
COMPLETE	=1 if completed project, 0 otherwise
POSTMT	Total months since project
	Pre-project measures (explanatory variables)
MALE	=1 if male, 0 if female
AGE	Age at start date
AGE2021	=1 if age at start date was 20 or 21, 0 otherwise
AGE2223	=1 if age at start date was 22 or 23, 0 otherwise
AGEOV24	=1 if age at start date was 24 or more, 0 otherwise
ATLANTIC	=1 if resided in Atlantic provinces, 0 otherwise
QUEBEC	=1 if resided in Québec, 0 otherwise
PRAIRIES	=1 if resided in Prairie provinces or Northwest Territories, 0 otherwise
PACIFIC	=1 if resided in British Columbia or Yukon Territory, 0 otherwise
ENGLISH	=1 if interviewed in English, 0 otherwise
SINGLE	=1 if marital status was single at start date, 0 otherwise
LIVEWPAR	=1 if lived with parents at start date, 0 otherwise
Q.3	Highest level of education at start date
SOMEPS	=1 if had some post-secondary education at start date, but had not graduated, 0 otherwise
PSGRAD	=1 if was a Post-Secondary Graduate at start date, 0 otherwise
DEPCHILD	=1 if had dependent children at start date, 0 otherwise
VISMIN	=1 if member of visible minority, 0 otherwise
DISAB	=1 if had a disability at start date, 0 otherwise
Q.5	=1 if participated in extra-curricular activities at school, 0 otherwise
Q.6	=1 if did volunteer work in year before start date, 0 otherwise

Variable	Description
Q.18.1	Importance, to interest in participating in YSC, of getting skills that will be useful on a job (scale, 1 to 7, not important to very important)
Q.18.2	Importance, to interest in participating in YSC, of having something useful to do (scale, 1 to 7, not important to very important)
Q.18.3	Importance, to interest in participating in YSC, of making a contribution to my community (scale, 1 to 7, not important to very important)
Q.18.4	Importance, to interest in participating in YSC, of having an income (scale, 1 to 7, not important to very important)
Q.18.5	Importance, to interest in participating in YSC, of qualifying for the completion bonus (scale, 1 to 7, not important to very important)
Q.18.6	Importance, to interest in participating in YSC, of gaining confidence in myself and my abilities (scale, 1 to 7, not important to very important)
Q.18.7	Importance, to interest in participating in YSC, of getting a full-time job after the project (scale, 1 to 7, not important to very important)
Q.18.8	Importance, to interest in participating in YSC, of getting work experience (scale, 1 to 7, not important to very important)
Q.20.3	=1 if future plans include wanting to find a job, 0 otherwise
Q.20.5	=1 if future plans include wanting to return to school, 0 otherwise
Q.21.01	Have as much to contribute as anyone, pre-project (scale, 1 to 7, of how well the description fits)
Q.21.02	Would not want to admit to people that I was not working, pre-project (scale, 1 to 7, of how well the description fits)
Q.21.03	Being unemployed is one of the worst things I can think of, pre-project (scale, 1 to 7, of how well the description fits)
Q.21.04	Am able to do things as well as anyone, pre-project (scale, 1 to 7, of how well the description fits)
Q.21.05	Don't expect to get what I really want out of life, pre-project (scale, 1 to 7, of how well the description fits)
Q.21.06	Would take better paying job even if it meant spending less time with family, pre-project (scale, 1 to 7, of how well the description fits)
Q.21.07	Would be better off on social assistance than if working, pre-project (scale, 1 to 7, of how well the description fits)
Q.21.08	Would turn down better paying job if had to move from community, pre-project (scale, 1 to 7, of how well the description fits)
Q.21.09	Have a number of good qualities, pre-project (scale, 1 to 7, of how well the description fits)
Q.21.10	Know how to find a job, pre-project (scale, 1 to 7, of how well the description fits)
Q.21.11	Don't want to have to depend on government support in the future, pre-project (scale, 1 to 7, of how well the description fits)
Q.21.12	Have a positive attitude about myself, pre-project (scale, 1 to 7, of how well the description fits)

Variable	Description
Q.21.13	Getting good job depends on being in right place at right time, pre-project (scale, 1 to 7, of how well the description fits)
Q.21.14	More than most people, I rely on myself to solve my problems, pre-project (scale, 1 to 7, of how well the description fits)
Q.24	Reads newspapers or magazines, pre-project (scale, 1 to 4, daily to never)
Q.25	Rating of ability to read newspapers or magazines, pre-project (scale,1 to 5, poor to excellent)
Q.31	Rating of ability to make others understand meaning of writing (scale,1 to 5, poor to excellent)
Q.33	Rating of ability to do simple arithmetic (scale,1 to 5, poor to excellent)
Q.34	Likes working with numbers, pre-project (1= very much, 2=somewhat, 3=not at all)
Q.37	Rating of ability to lead discussions (scale,1 to 5, poor to excellent)
Q.39	Rating of ability to use various types of equipment, pre-project (scale, 1 to 5, poor to excellent)
Q.40	Uses personal computer, pre-project (scale, 1 to 4, daily to never)
Q.41	Rating of ability to use personal computers (scale,1 to 5, poor to excellent)
Q.43	Participates in team or group activities, pre-project (scale, 1 to 4, daily to never)
Q.44	Rating of ability to work as member of a group (scale,1 to 5, poor to excellent)
PREEARN1	Annual earnings, one year before project
PREPTL	Proportion of time in labour force, year before project
PREPTE	Proportion of time employed, year before project
PREPTS	Proportion of time in school or training, year before project
PREIBEN	Annual UI/EI benefits, year before project
PREWELF	Annual welfare benefits in year before project
PREWAGE	Weekly wage in main job, year before project
PREHWPW	Hours worked per week in main job, year before project
	Post-project measures (dependent variables)
POSTEARN	Annualized earnings since project
POSTPTL	Proportion of time in labour force since project
POSTPTE	Proportion of time employed since project
POSTPTS	Proportion of time in school or training since project
POSTIBEN	Annual EI benefits, 1997
POSTWELF	Annual welfare benefits since project
POSTWAGE	Weekly wage, most recent job to do (scale, 1 to 7, not important to very important)
POSTHWPW	Hours worked per week, most recent job
Q12A	Reads newspapers or magazines, post-project (scale, 1 to 4, daily to never)

Variable	Description
Q12B	Uses a personal computer, post-project (scale, 1 to 4, daily to never)
Q12C	Participates in team activities, post-project (scale, 1 to 4, daily to never)
Q13A	Ability to read newspapers or magazines, post-project (scale,1 to 5, poor to excellent)
Q13B	Ability to make others understand written meaning, post-project (scale, 1 to 5, poor to excellent)
Q13C	Ability to do simple arithmetic, post-project (scale,1 to 5, poor to excellent)
Q13D	Ability to lead discussion groups or meetings, post-project (scale,1 to 5, poor to excellent)
Q13E	Ability to use a personal computer, post-project (scale,1 to 5, poor to excellent)
Q13F	Ability to work as a member of a team, post-project (scale,1 to 5, poor to excellent)
Q14A	Has as much to contribute as anyone, post-project (scale,1 to 5, poor to excellent)
Q14B	Would not want to admit was not working, post-project (scale,1 to 5, poor to excellent)
Q14C	Being unemployed is one of the worst things, post-project (scale,1 to 5, poor to excellent)
Q14D	Able to do things as well as anyone, post-project (scale,1 to 5, poor to excellent)
Q14E	Doesn't expect to get what really wants of life, post-project (scale,1 to 5, poor to excellent)
Q14F	Would take better job if less time with family, post-project (scale,1 to 5, poor to excellent)
Q14G	Better off on social assistance than working, post-project (scale,1 to 5, poor to excellent)
Q14H	Would turn down better job if had to move, post-project (scale,1 to 5, poor to excellent)
Q14I	Has a number of good qualities, post-project (scale,1 to 5, poor to excellent)
Q14J	Knows how to find a job, post-project (scale,1 to 5, poor to excellent)
Q14K	Doesn't want to depend on government support
Q14L	Has a positive attitude about self, post-project (scale,1 to 5, poor to excellent)
Q14M	Getting job depends on right place at right time, post-project (scale, 1 to 5, poor to excellent)
Q14N	More than most relies on self to solve problems, post-project (scale, 1 to 5, poor to excellent